

Voluntary Stewardship Program - Technical Panel (Statewide Advisory Committee invited)

Tuesday, May 24, 2016
9am – 4:00pm

Facilitator – Bill Eller, VSP Coordinator, WSCC

Meeting Logistics:

In person meeting: North Bend train depot, 205 McClellan St, North Bend, WA 98045. Here is a [link](#) for [directions](#). Lunch will be provided for Statewide Advisory Committee (SAC), Technical Panel (TP), staff and presenters (provided they register by May 13) - others are on their own. Please fill out the [RSVP](#).

Session Objective:

Update SAC and TP on VSP status. Informal presentation of the progress Chelan County has made on the draft version of their work plan.

Attendees:

Graham Simon, WDFW; Lauren Driscoll, ECY; Branden Rosen, WWAA; Brian Erickson, Anchor QEA; John Small, Anchor QEA; Adams Cares, Stevens County VSP; Brian Cochrane, WSCC; Amy Windrope, WDFW; John Stuhlmiller, WFB; Evan Sheffels, WFB; Ron Shultz, WSCC; Linda Lyshall, SJICD; Kelsey Green, SJICD; Craig Gyselinck, CCD; Lisa Greuter, Berk Consulting; Mike Cushman, CCD; Mike Kaputa, Chelan County; Bill Eller, WSCC; Britt Dudek, Chelan; Tom Clingman, ECY

9:00 am: Opening Comments, Introductions, Session Objective & Agenda

9:10 am: Approval of April 24, 2016 meeting minutes
The TP agrees that electronic (by email) approval of minutes is sufficient. If receiving no edits or other comments, ok to assume approval. So, April 24, 2016 meeting minutes approved.

9:15 am: VSP Program Status

- County contracts and work groups update

Ron reports that Adams County Commissioners are signing the VSP contract with the Commission. Bill gives an overview of the current county contract status.

John asks about how the work group timeline works for the counties. There is a funding timeline v. statutory timeline and work groups shouldn't get those confused. There should be some outreach on that. Bill confirmed that he is providing outreach on both timelines to avoid confusion among all those associated with VSP. A general discussion about the timeline ensues. A question was asked about the Commission's funding request and if funding isn't provided beyond the fiscal year. Ron says that county self-funding is an option, but the Commission would have to make a determination of lack of funding if the Legislature doesn't fund VSP in the next fiscal year. Ron says the message shouldn't be to focus on the funding and when it runs out, but to focus on crafting a well-documented work plan. John and Evan say the Timeline document should be amended to say that the timeline is subject to Legislative funding for VSP.

Amy asks about the counties working together on work plans. Ron says some have issues with local politics that complicate that (Adams, Asotin, Garfield, Columbia). Some are working together to share templates and information.

A discussion was had about last month's meeting wherein the Technical Panel (TP) reviewed materials on Thurston County's web site related to their draft work plan. Bill explained a conversation he had with Charissa Waters from Thurston County which addressed this. He relayed that the TP was looking at the materials to get a sense of what Thurston and Chelan County (the two pilot VSP counties) had done so far and to help inform the TP as they move forward with work plan policies and guidance for counties.

The TP members then discussed having the next TP meeting be a joint meeting with the Statewide Advisory Committee (SAC). The SAC would meet in the morning, and the TP would join them in the afternoon. The focus of the meeting would be on what has happened so far and the work plan policies and guidance for counties. SAC membership was discussed, and issues related to county, environmental, and tribal SAC member representation and retention on the SAC. The next joint meeting of the TP and SAC will occur on June 30, 2016, from 9am-4pm, in Lacey – likely at the Farm Bureau office. From 9am-12noon the SAC would meet and from 1pm-4pm the TP would join them.

- Commission VSP web site update

Bill gives an update on the Commission's VSP web page. John brings up an old link to a prior Commission web page. Bill will resolve that issue.

- Information needs

Kelly says that WSDA will make a critical areas (CA) and Ag Activities (AgA) map / GIS layer available to counties that want that. Perry Beale will have maps available that show current (2016) and VSP baseline (July 22, 2011) data. The discussion continues around Thurston County and Ag lands versus AgA. Amy says that data in the work plans must be repeatable / able to be replicated. If a county is using their own mapping, they should use it. Kelly will work on a WSDA web page that will have Perry's data.

- Other issues

None discussed.

10:00 am: VSP FY 17-19 program budget update

- State agency budget for next FY's

Ron gives an update on the budget. He explains that the Commission just had their May meeting, and at that meeting a VSP budget decision package was presented to the Commissioners. VSP funding will not automatically roll-over to the next fiscal year. A decision packet must be done. The Commissioner's looked at various decision packets.

A discussion about VSP and VSP-like (using GMA but having a voluntary process to address CA's – counties work with their local conservation districts (CDs) to develop landowner plans for protection) counties ensues. Those counties that didn't opt-in to VSP would like additional funding for conservation districts in their counties to assist with CA project implementation.

A discussion about whether or not the non-VSP county request should be included in the VSP decision package occurs. Ron explains that Whatcom, Clark and Snohomish counties have a collaborative VSP-like process, but didn't opt-in to VSP. Island lost its case, but has a VSP-like process. King, Pierce, and Kitsap at not addressing Ag. Ron explains that the Commission is looking at this. Tom says he understands that those counties didn't opt-in. Ron says that political support for the VSP budget package may be a factor. Ron explains that conservation district personnel help write the Commission's budget packages. We are crafting a template and structure for decision packets for the TP to review. Next month is the start of the process. August 1 is the deadline for the Commission to consider decision packets. The decision package will incorporate both the VSP and VSP-like counties. How much should be given to those VSP-like counties? State agency requests need to be done by the next meeting.

A discussion ensues about the state agency budget requests and identifying budget priorities for FY 17-19. Amy thinks that fully funding counties is #1, VSP-like counties is ok and CD capacity is ok. What is most important is helping counties come up with baseline data and helping them with the technical side of establishing the baseline. Kelly agrees. Ron says the work of the counties goes beyond 2018. Amy says it likely will take longer for counties to craft work plans and more information and data is needed to support them. More data products will be needed.

Tom says it is an iterative issue. If the work groups adopt a metric that sounds good but isn't measurable, then they are stuck. So, a fundamental issue is whether this is an appropriate step for state agencies. Should we engage work groups to help come up with ways to measure progress? Ron agrees with Tom. Maps and how to set benchmarks. Identification by county of what a benchmark is. Should we require maps or not. Should CA's be identified? VSP says no new work is required. Mapping costs lots of money. The problem is how to measure progress on CA's if you don't have a map. Does the TP need a map? The RCW says to identify the benchmark, not have a map. Work groups could describe CA's and how they intersect with AgA in a narrative. Amy says it must be measurable and repeatable.

Linda says that San Juan is looking at this – water quality data and a wetlands overlay. We are looking at what we have.

Kelly says that water quality data and tying that to AgA is difficult. Skagit County example. Chelan went there then stepped back.

Ron says that work groups could use water quality as a surrogate. Could define in the work plan how that issue could help to target CA and AgA. It could be in a narrative.

Amy says she could see that as a way to proceed. Temporary criteria is more problematic because 60% of streams are over temperature.

Ron asks if a map is needed or if there is some other way to show the data? The expectation is to show measurable progress in 5 years.

Tom is concerned that mapping won't get us where we need to go. Going out 15 years in the future, CA will be mapped. How to integrate that into work plans? Tom has concerns about relying on static mapping. We should look at stream health as a measurement – indicators over time. Chemical, biological, physical health.

Amy – measuring riparian areas – the cost of implementation of measuring those can be done cost effectively. County with low land base and income – look to how to monitor on a tight budget. Supplemental monitoring (BIBI) – everyone can replicate that.

Linda asks if the basis is 2016 or 2011. RCW says 2011.

Ron says to start with 2011 and explain how things have changed / why.

Tom asks if it needs to start from both 2011 and 2016? A general discussion ensues.

John says the question is what has changed in CA and AgA between 2011-2016? Very little. Garfield county discussion. How detailed to get in the baseline analysis? Should identify the change between the CA and AgA. Ron says the date is important because the court says there is a duty to protect – as of when? The date the VSP legislation passed. Discussion of why protection and how VSP applies ensues.

Amy asks about the 5 year check in and what date that must happen for the work plans. A discussion over the 5 year check in date – when it begins – ensues. There is a 10 year initial requirement for the work plan, then 5 years after that.

Amy says good data is key.

Ron is concerned about the approach that doesn't use July 22, 2011 as the protection date. What is don't know what function and values to protect as of 2011? That should be explained in the work plan. What evidence to use? Show your work in the work plan.

Linda asks about AgA – what is it? What is the size you are looking for? How small to go? This discussion is held over until after lunch.

Tom asks if all are in agreement that state natural resource agencies can help sort of VSP questions? Should we keep working on that? State agencies may need to design some programs.

Ron explains that at \$150,000 per year x2 FY per county, the budget request will be \$8.1M. Base FTE costs at \$300,000 per year x2 FY for agencies brings that up to \$8.7M. We will need other agency cost calculations – include (at a minimum) TP FTE participation and agency staff support (different level of engagement) for FY 17-19. What issues for agency staff reports? If in 2018 we are having work plans approved, then monitoring of those work plans – how much support is needed? County and state agency budget for monitoring after work plans are approved in 2018? This must not become too expensive.

Amy asks what is most important to monitor? Not all Priority Habitat and Species (PHS). Riparian areas is likely what WDFW will focus on. There is where AgA intersects.

Kelly says ECY wants one FTE.

Brian asks about BIBI and what is in the matrix? Goals could be different in each county. Could have different monitoring for each county.

Amy asks if we need a coordinator of monitoring at the state agency level? There may be statewide monitoring approaches for some benchmarks that are more cost effective than each county developing individual approaches. But some support will be needed. We need to support that coordinating effort. Agencies may need to adjust their own budgets.

Ron says that we should stay to under \$10M in total.

John says the Legislature wants this done as cheap as possible. The \$7.9M is ok? What about more? Might be hard to ask for monitoring now since work plans are not yet done. Monitoring needs to begin now since we are already 8 years behind on getting a baseline.

Kelly asks if counties get done early, could we do a supplemental budget request for monitoring?

Ron says to go for a base amount now.

Amy asks if we need to ask for money to help for monitoring and setting up work plans for measurable goals?

Ron says the EPA and NRCS might have funds to help.

Kelly asks if the Commission budget request of \$300K includes all staff time? Ron says yes. Each agency is under \$300k. Kelly says we can look for other money as we go. Ron says the Commission is developing a "monitoring" budget decision package separate from the VSP request, and that could be used as well.

10:45 am: TP and SAC

- TP ground rules – review ground rules adopted by the TP 4.26.16

No discussion on this item.

- Work Plan policy and procedure for SAC and TP review document update

The discussion starts off with the question – what is a completed work plan (WP)? What is complete? Who decides? The Commission is the consensus.

Amy asks how to know if the WP is completed? Once it is submitted?

John says it must address “A-L” in the statute (RCW 36.70A.720(1)(a-l)). But what if it doesn’t? A general discussion of submittal v. complete ensues. Perhaps a phrase needs to be put in our guidance that the “WP is deemed complete when the WP addresses all 15 items in our substantive elements” in our draft WP policy and procedure guidance? Discussion of work plan framework generally.

Ron asks if the TP can require that the work plan include PHS in a CA that is not identified in the CA ordinance (CAO)? Example: What if a species of concern is not addressed in the WP. Salmonids for example. It is listed, but not addressed in the WP. Would this species need to be mentioned in the WP? A general discussion ensues. Do all the CA’s need to be addressed in the WP, or just those that intersect with AgA? What about species not identified in the CAO but AgA intersect with that – does that need to be addressed? CA should be defined in the WP.

Amy says that PHS is defined as CA. Shouldn’t be a problem for WDFW.

Ron says we need to say that CA is “as identified by the County.” There is a policy choice to be made as to the definition of CA. The choice is (1) if the definition of CA the one that is in the CAO of the county? Or (2) the statutory definition of CA in VSP? Advantages – some CA in CAO and WP, but may be out of date. The definition of CA could be different than that adopted in the CAO. This could “unfreeze” the old CAO – which is supposed to be frozen until renewed.

The CA’s, as defined by the county, is the best information as to what CA is.

Amy says timing is important. If the CAO was created in 2000. It’s now 2016. Some species may not be in there. Regulatory component not captured.

Brian says that the VSP RCW says that “in conjunction with other plans and regulations” the TP is supposed to evaluate the WP – there is a small number of this happening. Who’s duty is it to identify the other plans and regulations? The work group or the TP?

- Salmon recovery funding and VSP

No discussion on this item.

- Level of support that TP and state agencies provide to Work Groups

No new discussion of this item. See discussion in “budget” above.

- Work plan submittal timeline for evaluating the 27 plans

No new discussion of this item. See discussion in “budget” above.

12:30 pm: Informal look at Chelan County’s draft work plan – how the goals and benchmarks track with and relate to RCW 36.70A.720 – review and discussion.

- 1) Chelan County staff and WG members informally present their work so far.
- 2) Don’t have all answers.
- 3) An approach we think can be supported.
- 4) 3 watersheds – nominated all basins.
- 5) Significant AgA and non-ESA salmonids.
- 6) September 2016 – Chelan County work plan deadline (approximate).
- 7) Mapping used county CA definitions, not RCW / statute.
- 8) Ag viability discussion.

- 9) Direct participant (those who signed up for VSP) and Indirect participants (those who installed beneficial practices, but not signed up in VSP). Ag is happening along shoreline – used feet along stream as measure.
- 10) Definitions – Ag viability not set.
- 11) Mapping before and after 2011
- 12) Flood hazard – relied on county regs for goals and benchmarks
 - Tom asks about AgA on steep slopes – might be beneficial to CA?
 - Amy asks about PHS – mule deer and elk.
- 13) Enhancements – direct / indirect participants
- 14) Certifications – how to capture that?
- 15) "Aims" – different than goals and benchmarks.
- 16) Ag viability – still working on it; marketing VSP to farmers. Where is VSP incentive? Property tax reduction? Bump up in priority for water right processing? County "fast track" for permitting? Encourage thinking outside the box for incentives.
- 17) Economic value v. other metrics – cultural or market forces.
- 18) Checklist – Monitoring – Chapter 8 – technical provider the conservation district. The Checklist is part of the stewardship plan. Confidentiality is a problem – how to measure without releasing participants name. Identified by WRIA. Add a category to the Checklist of "if you don't do this, why not?" and "I'm not interested in "x"" so that you can address or fix "x". Rolling up data – landowners own property in different watersheds. RCW says watershed or county. Keeping landowners confidential may be difficult – hard to match participant's number and track data from the checklist.
 - Adaptive management matrix – 5 year check in.
 - Amy likes – it's clear.
 - Brian agrees. The Matrix drives your goals and benchmarks. The monitoring should answer whether the goals and benchmarks were met. The Matrix is where everything connects. [Chelan County] Still working on active thresholds. Could use random sample as threshold rather than "x" percent – for example – how are 5 random properties doing – extrapolate to whole WRIA. [Chelan County] Every 2 years we will update the maps. [Chelan County] Every year we will gather monitoring data.
 - Tom says the "monitoring method" needs to be identified – it drives all the other columns.
 - Kelly like the format – can include other data.

Questions for Chelan:

Amy asks about whether or not identifying CA in the work plan is a prerequisite for a complete plan. The discussion is around the County CAO definitions compared to the state definitions (RCW's and WAC's). Chelan used both. Their outreach will use the shorter definitions. The mapping appendix uses the longer definitions. County maps had definitions. The mapping criteria had insight into how they defined them.

Amy asks if replicatable? Yes. Chelan started with their own Ag mapping, but now WSDA Ag data mapping is available.

Kelly asks about feedback on DNR data – federal and state land information.

Lisa says shoreline planning maps are available.

Mike says the same people working on shoreline are the same working on VSP.

Tom asks what a seasonal high tunnel is.

Amy asks about PHS – were some excluded from the mapping? Chelan County has Class 1 and 2 and both were used – all PHS were included.

How was PHS point data handled? Chelan County used public data. Intersect calculations were made with the point data.

Amy comments – amazing job.

Tom and Brian would like more on the benchmarks and how monitoring will address them.

Mike says those are important to the county.

Amy asks if they were looking at a current draft of the matrix? Chelan County says yes, it's there.

Ron asks about the background meta-data. It is still disclosable – might need legislation.

Britt says that is the reason we were not more specific.

Ron says that is part of what makes VSP different from GMA – not per parcel. Pressure is still there to get per parcel data. VSP doesn't worry about individuals – worry about the WRIA. Need to show progress.

Britt says that VSP is set up by watershed, and the concern is that the VSP technical provider will need more detail.

Kelly and Ron says landowner participation is the key. We can't scare them away.

Britt ask what implementation is – what does it mean?

A general discussion occurs about landowner disclosure issues and solicited versus unsolicited participation in VSP. How to get unsolicited to participate? Could do watershed specific workshops and offer pesticide credits to attend.

Amy asks what is in it for Ag?

John says that that was part of the legislative process with VSP – Ag viability wasn't defined.

Amy asks if more homework is needed on this?

Mike says what is helpful to the landowner can help define ag viability.

Ron says the open space tax break could be a benefit to the county. It would be paid back on the land sale. Could be an incentive. The county revenue remains the same. Burden would be spread out to all others. Worth looking into.

Britt agrees.

Tom asks about the conflict between buffer requirements and fire safety.

Mike says there is no exemption in the CAO to manage riparian areas for fire.

It's a forest practices issue.

Mike says we need to come back to adaptive management.

Next meeting – joint meeting with SAC – June 30, 2016 in Lacey.